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Asymmetries in Transnational Social Protection: Perspectives of Migrants and Nonmigrants

By
BAŞAK BILECEN

This study investigates the extent to which migrants' embeddedness in two formal social protection systems (country of origin and host country) influences the resources they exchange in their informal supportive relationships. I analyze the support networks of a matched sample of Turkish migrants in Germany and their significant others in Turkey to illuminate the conditions and meaning of reciprocal resource exchanges, finding that both migrants and nonmigrants perceive formal social protection offered by Germany as superior to that of Turkey. I show that those perceptions have implications for how financial support is exchanged with the family but have less impact on friendships. These implications for family included unequal power relationships, changes in equity among siblings and family, different valuation processes of resources, and thus, (reciprocal) exchanges.

Keywords: transnational social protection; international migration; reciprocity; personal networks; multisited research; matched sample; low-income families

Millions of people around the world use migration as a strategy to overcome poverty, not only for themselves but also for their close family members who stay behind in their country of origin. Migrants send financial remittances home to support their partners, children, and other relatives in their country of origin (Garip 2014; Massey and Basem 1992;

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Menjívar et al. 1998), and the people whom migrants leave behind provide the migrants with emotional support, a sense of belonging (Ryan 2011; Zontini and Reynolds 2007), and an array of services (e.g., childcare, help with housing and business investments) (Mazzucato 2011). Yet migration can also disrupt social networks (Putnam 2000) that protect individuals against risks like poverty and social exclusion, as ties are lost or watered down over time (Lubbers et al. 2010), creating a need for migrants to strengthen such networks locally (Ryan 2007).

While transnational care arrangements have received considerable scholarly attention in recent years (Baldassar 2007; Boccagni 2015; Bryceson and Vuorela 2002; Parreñas 2001), there is still little understanding of migrants' personal support networks given that their lives simultaneously span two nation-states' formal protection structures. In general, research into social support (Berkman and Glass 2000; Taylor 2011) often ignores the fact that social support exchanged between persons is embedded in the formal protective schemes of nation-states, such as welfare regimes. For instance, international migrants with a steady income may send financial remittances back home to their siblings so that they can hire nurses to care for elderly parents or relatives, because there may not be sufficient state infrastructures to do so without financial help from the migrant relative. The opposite could also be true: grandparents may go to the country of destination to care for grandchildren so that parents can work, perhaps because childcare is costly or there are few childcare facilities in the country of destination. When a person migrates, their relationships to people who stay behind are embedded in the protective schemes of two nation-states (the origin country and the destination country). I argue that these regimes affect the ways in which informal social protection exchanged in these relationships is understood and negotiated. The double embeddedness can give migrants and nonmigrants certain benefits, but it can also alter support mechanisms. In particular, I argue in this article that this double embeddedness affects the reciprocity of support exchanges and the power balance between the giver and the receiver of support. A better understanding of transnational social protection is important to design more effective social policies for families of migrants in a globalized world. Families of migrants are geographically separated and are subject to different welfare regimes, which might widen existing inequalities within and between societies. More generally, an accumulation of knowledge in studies like this one can shed light on how societal contexts affect mechanisms of informal social protection.

In this research, I investigate patterns of social protection for Turkish migrants in Germany and their significant others in Turkey by adopting a matched sample in a multisited research design (Barglowski, Bilecen, and Amelina 2015; Bilecen

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2016; Mazzucato 2009). Instead of the term *social support*, I adopt the concept *informal social protection* (Faist 2013; Faist et al. 2015) to highlight the complementarity of such protection with nation-state protection frameworks, as I outline in the next sections. The examination of givers' and receivers' perspectives of social protection across borders contributes to an in-depth understanding of the meanings attached to resources and norms of reciprocity, as migration is never only an individual experience.

Apart from the focus on the embeddedness of personal protective relationships within national welfare schemes, the study extends previous research in two other ways. First, the majority of studies on transnational social protection are conducted with only one of the two people in a relationship. In so doing, exchanges of protective resources are evaluated from only the migrants' perspective or from only the perspective of those who were left behind (exceptions include Dankyi, Mazzucato, and Manuh 2017; Marchetti-Mercer 2012; Poeze, Dankyi, and Mazzucato 2017). Because social protection is relational, *de facto*, it involves at least two people. By analyzing both people's evaluations of resource exchange, we can understand the relationships between the givers and receivers better, as well as the instability and inequality in resource exchanges.

Second, migration research emphasizes family ties over other nonkin relationships that might be equally important. However, when individuals migrate, their "left-behind" ties include not only their immediate family members but also, for example, childhood friends and former neighbors. Although family ties are important, the literature highlights other types of relationships that have different supportive functions (Small and Sukhu 2016; Wellman and Wortley 1990). In the seminal study of East Yorkers, Wellman and Wortley (1990) found that while ties between parents and children are the most supportive mainly in terms of emotions, friends tend to be companions. This study therefore focuses on both family members and friends.

The empirical material comes from an international collaborative research project¹ that involves interviews with Turkish migrants who live in Germany ($n = 20$) and their significant others in Turkey ($n = 10$) through a matched sample (see also Barglowski, Bilecen, and Amelina 2015). Turkish migrants in Germany represent a crucial case to investigate because they are the largest ethnic minority in the country and are marginalized. The long migration history of Turkish migrants started in 1961 with a guest-worker agreement between Turkey and Germany. Most migrant workers had a lower educational background than did Germans and worked in manufacturing and construction, and, in the late-1960s, in the lower levels of the service sector (Abadan-Unat and Bilecen 2020). There is ample evidence of their limited access to education and self-exclusion due to discrimination from the majority society (Çelik 2015; Song 2011). The second generation still tends to have disadvantages in the labor market, even if they have the necessary training and educational credentials (Song 2011; Sürig and Wilmes 2015). Thus, Turkish migrants represent a stigmatized minority group in Germany, grounded mainly in their different ethnicity, cultural, and religious practices and usually a lower educational background (Barwick 2016).

Conceptual Framework

Transnational social protection

Social protection refers to the complex assemblages of “strategies to cope with social risks arising in capitalist economies in fields such as employment, health care, and education” (Faist 2013, 3; cf. Faist 2019; Faist et al. 2015; Levitt et al. 2017; Sabates-Wheeler and Feldman 2011). Such social risks comprise unemployment, lack of care, poverty, and social exclusion. Social protection comprises formal elements, i.e., opportunity structures codified in nation-state rules and regulations; and informal elements, i.e., resources embedded in personal networks (Bilecen and Bargłowski 2015). Although there is considerable overlap between the concept of informal social protection and that of social support due to their relational constitution, the term informal social protection acknowledges that resources embedded in interpersonal networks complement and are closely interlinked with welfare state provisions.

International migration can lead to a reevaluation of both formal and informal social protection practices. Notably, migrants may have multiple connections to at least two welfare regimes that are regulated through social policies and regulations or bilateral agreements, even though sometimes they are excluded from one or even both.

For transnational informal social protection, most of the literature focuses on family- and ethnically based community networks or religious communities that help migrants to minimize social risks (see Glick Schiller 2005a; Ryan 2011). These networks and communities play an especially crucial role in the lives of migrants. They are embedded within and across borders that are spatially bound to certain laws, rules, and regulations of welfare schemes, including health, employment, education, and family benefits. Thus, the dynamics of different social policies frame informal social protection relationships with the family members and friends who remain in their country of origin.

First, migration policies might pose legal constraints on families. In this sense, transnational migration research finds that state infrastructures and policies affect migrants’ ability to move in the first place. For example, Bilecen and colleagues (2015) found that it was difficult for families from Turkey to visit and support their grandchildren in Germany due to visa regulations and the hardships of obtaining one; while Polish grandmothers did not encounter such difficulties, because Poland is an EU Member State, which enabled Polish people to move freely across national borders (Bargłowski, Krzyżowski, and Świątek 2015).

Second, the state’s territorial control (Faist 2000; Glick Schiller 2005a) and social protection frameworks (Faist 2019; Faist et al. 2015; Levitt et al. 2017) also affect the formation of transnational networks and communities. It is important to investigate how migrants and nonmigrants in different countries interact with a range of state institutions and policies as well as their perceptions of both contexts and their participation in discourses about society, nation, and migration phenomena (Glick Schiller 2005b). Once we understand migrants’ and nonmigrants’ perspectives and interactions with a nation-state, we can then articulate

the influence of nation-state frameworks, such as welfare regimes, on personal relationships, social locations, social worth of welfare, and perceived social inequalities.

Geographic distance and state regulations affect informal social protection; but informal social protection also depends on personal relations that change due to migration. Some personal relationships are preserved, while others are disrupted or dissolved over time and through geographic separation, or they change in their content. For example, when women migrate and become the main breadwinner of the family, while leaving their children in their home countries, there are implications for gender dynamics, child care, and current and future intergenerational protective relations (Parreñas 2001).

Reciprocity in transnational social protection

Continuous reciprocal exchanges (e.g., gift exchanges between friends, neighborly exchanges of small items like a cup of sugar for coffee) are a main mechanism of maintaining personal ties. Simmel (1950) theorized that reciprocal exchanges tend to maintain relations by fostering feelings of gratitude. For Simmel, gratitude is “the moral memory of mankind” (1950, 388). Following Simmel, Gouldner (1960) posited that reciprocity works as a social mechanism, mainly by creating new social relationships, and he applied the concept to the contexts of power imbalances. He distinguished between *reciprocity as a pattern of mutually contingent exchange* and *the generalized norm of reciprocity*. Gouldner noted that some people might want to get more than they give, which results in imbalances and, eventually, exploitation. Even when there is a propensity for exploitation, however, reciprocity as a *norm* would function as a safeguard. According to Gouldner, when one end of the social tie feels obligated to give much more than the other end, asymmetries in relationships will surface. Building on Gouldner’s work, Hansen (2004) argued that the rules of reciprocity and the ways in which they are invoked are largely determined by social class. For example, in studying childcare networks, Hansen (2004) examined class contingencies of reciprocity and found that reciprocation differs between upper and working classes because of material and time costs associated with reciprocation. Because upper-class mothers have wealth and status, they tend not to ask for support from their personal ties, whereas lower-class respondents mainly have support from their family ties and tend not to ask for support from other personal ties when they perceive reciprocation would be a burden for them.

Social mechanisms of such resource exchanges are important not only because of who gives what, where, and in exchange for what, but because of their unequal implications for both migrants and nonmigrants (Bilecen, Çatır, and Orhon 2015; Faist et al. 2015). Ideally, givers and receivers of supportive resources have shared beliefs about the type and value of the resource. If not, problems in reciprocity might emerge. Research has argued that one type of resource can be “returned” as another type, signaling “generalized reciprocity” (Sahlins 1965). The value of certain types of support might change over time. In addition, perspectives about the value of resources might be different in the eyes of the

receivers and givers. Individuals evaluate resources based on cultural norms and values. International migration may affect individuals' evaluation processes, which could result in a change in the value ascribed to a resource by the receiver. Givers might attach value to such resources that, in the eyes of the receiver, were not as important or as highly regarded before migration. Those mismatches are important to study as a means to understand the wider consequences of international migration. To counterbalance the overly optimistic studies that indicate that international migrants' sending financial remittances home to support their significant others leads to development (see De Haas 2007 for a critical review) and that such transactions have only pure economic implications (e.g. Taylor 1999; World Bank 2006), the current study evaluates the nuances of such protective exchanges and shows the discrepancies between what is actually being exchanged and how these exchanges are (re-)evaluated depending on the social and national context.

Transnational research: Those who stayed

In contrast to earlier research that highlighted migrants' financial remittances to those in their country of origin and their implications for the country's development (Durand, Parrado, and Massey 1996; Massey and Basem 1992; Portes 2007), contemporary research has been interested in resource exchanges across borders. In addition to financial resources, migrants also remit ideas and knowledge to their country of origin, known as "social remittances":

What migrants bring and continue to receive from their homelands affects their experiences in the countries where they settle. This, in turn, affects what they send back to non migrants who either disregard or adopt these ideas and behaviours, transforming them in the process, and eventually re-remitting them back to migrants who adopt and transform them once again. (Levitt and Lamba-Nieves 2011, 3)

Along similar lines, Mazzucato (2011), who studied Ghanaian migrants in Amsterdam, found reciprocal support exchanges between family members who resided in both places and emphasized the importance of support that comes from the stayers, which she called "reverse remittances."

The literature suggests that there is a great power asymmetry between migrants and left-behind extended family members (Menjívar and Agadjanian 2007; Schmalzbauer 2008). For example, Menjívar and Agadjanian studied wives who were left behind in Armenia and Guatemala and found that gender inequality increased over time because wives became much more dependent on their husbands' financial remittances. In a similar vein, McKenzie and Menjívar (2011), who studied the meanings given to remittances and exchange relationships by Honduran women whose husbands migrated for work, found that the separation of couples put a lot of stress and anxiety on the shoulders of the left-behind wives. Similarly, wives in Turkey, whose husbands migrated to work in Europe, also talked about their difficulties, mainly in terms of being economically dependent on their husbands and their living situation with their in-laws in

Turkey, who had excessive demands (e.g., that they do all the household chores and/or take care of their husbands' elderly parents alone) and control (Çelik, Beşpınar, and Kalaycıoğlu 2013). Focusing on relationships beyond the nuclear family, Fuller-Iglesias (2015), who studied extended families from Mexico whose lives spanned Mexico and the United States, noted that, although some families strongly felt the geographic separation, others (usually return migrants) felt much closer to one another (mainly in their spousal relationships). Those who felt family fragmentation were usually parents whose multiple children had migrated to the United States, and some spouses who were living across borders for long periods reported strains on their relationships.

Recent research has looked at the perspectives of the left-behind family members in different contexts but has not addressed left-behind friendships. This is mainly because research has recruited only family members residing in the countries of origin. Although such a research design is a useful strategy, when asking migrants with whom they have protective relations, I found that migrants mentioned both important friendship relationships and family ties (Bilecen 2016, 2019).

Research Design and Sample

Empirical data for this study were collected between 2011 and 2013 and comprised participant observations, in-depth interviews, and personal network maps collected both in Germany ($n = 20$) and in Turkey ($n = 10$) as part of a collaborative research project. A multisited research design was implemented, whereby some of the initial respondents' personal connections were contacted and interviewed by the research team (Barglowski, Bilecen, and Amelina 2015; Bilecen 2016; Marcus 2011; Mazzucato and Wagner 2018). In so doing, the team was able to follow the movement of protective resources that connected different sites across borders and the meanings that different actors gave to those resources.

I interviewed and collected personal network data from all respondents. Data in Germany were collected through multiple access points to increase the heterogeneity of respondents, starting with randomly selected religious (e.g., Alevi organizations, mosques) and nonreligious organizations (e.g., integration courses, schools) in two urban areas, and continued with snowball sampling (with maximum two referrals). Five respondents were recruited through religious organizations and eight through nonreligious organizations, and snowballing yielded seven additional interviews, mainly with spouses, siblings, friends, and acquaintances of migrants. Although there are two couples and one pair of siblings, there is also one pair of acquaintances and a mother-son pair in the sample. Table 1 displays the characteristics of the respondents in Germany. The respondents are of Turkish and Kurdish ethnicities, and twelve respondents had at least one child. Three were retired, nine were unemployed (of whom two were students, and four were homemakers), and eight worked in sectors such as catering, construction, security, real estate, and sales. The sample in this study comprises low-income individuals in Germany. The interviews were conducted in Turkish.

TABLE 1
Respondent Characteristics in Germany

Name	Gender	Age	Marital Status	Migrant Status	Labor Market Status	Years spent in Germany
Ali	Male	21–30	Married	2 nd generation	Student/Part-time worker	11–20
Ahmet	Male	21–30	Relationship	2 nd generation	Student	21–30
Ömer	Male	31–40	Married	2 nd generation	Part-time worker	21–30
Lale	Female	41–50	Married	Labor migrant	Part-time worker	31–40
Faruk	Male	31–40	Married	Labor migrant	Self-employed	11–20
Süleyman	Male	61–70	Married	Labor migrant	Self-employed	41–50
Adnan	Male	71–80	Married	Labor migrant	Pensioner	41–50
Murat	Male	31–40	Married	2 nd generation	Employed	31–40
Nilgün	Female	61–70	Married	Family reunification	Homemaker	31–40
Berrin	Female	21–30	Married	2 nd generation	Unemployed	21–30
Münevver	Female	51–60	Widowed	Family reunification	Pensioner	31–40
Hülya	Female	41–50	Single	2 nd generation	Unemployed	31–40
Mustafa	Male	31–40	Single	Asylum seeker	Unemployed	11–20
Aylin	Female	61–70	Married	Family reunification	Homemaker	41–50
Bora	Male	31–40	Married	2 nd generation	Part-time worker	31–40
Berna	Female	41–50	Married	2 nd generation	Part-time worker	21–30
Elif	Female	61–70	Single	Labor migrant	Pensioner	41–50
Sema	Female	41–50	Single	Asylum seeker	Unemployed	11–20
Selda	Female	41–50	Married	Asylum seeker	Homemaker	11–20
Cemil	Male	31–40	Relationship	2 nd generation	Student	21–30

The interviewees were asked to name as many relationships as they wished in response to the name-generator question: “From time to time, most people need assistance, be it in the form of smaller or bigger tasks or favors. Who are the people with whom you usually exchange such assistance?” At the same time, they were given a network map with four concentric circles of importance of people in their lives (very important, important, less important and unimportant; Kahn and Antonucci [1980]), into which they placed their contacts (“alters”) and later reflected on the importance of each. Once the network maps were completed, I asked several questions about their relationships, including gender, location, type of relationship, and other aspects as a means to further understand the relationships that they maintained. Respondents were also asked about the relationships *among* alters. In 20 personal networks, a total of 301 alters were named as protective ties. Networks of migrants comprised between 8 and 27 contacts, with an average network size of 15. The average density score was 0.66, indicating that

networks were closely knit. They comprised family (61 percent) and friendship ties (39 percent), and 50 percent of the ties were considered very important; 39 percent, important; 11 percent, less important; and 0.01 percent, unimportant. Of the ties, 65 percent were living in Germany; 29 percent in Turkey; and 6 percent in other countries.

Participants were asked to indicate who could be interviewed by the research team in Turkey. Unlike previous research that has sought respondents in the countries of immigration with personal ties in a predetermined city in the country of origin (Mazzucato 2009; Poeze, Dankyi, and Mazzucato 2017), or recruited respondents in their country of origin with migrant family members (Çelik, Beşpınar, and Kalaycıoğlu 2013; McKenzie and Menjivar 2011; Menjivar and Agadjanian 2007), the respondents in this study decided whom to name as their personal relationships, and only after that did the research team ask for their location. Eight participants in Germany gave their ten significant others in Turkey. Table 2 contains information on the respondents in Turkey. Out of the ten in Turkey, four were siblings of the interviewees in Germany, and six were friends. The research team was surprised by this, as they were expecting participants to name mainly family members, given the prominence of ties between family members in the literature and because 61 percent of the ties identified through network analysis with participants were family. Nine of the siblings and friends were interviewed by the research team in Turkey in three different urban areas, while one was visiting Germany and was interviewed by the author there. All participants from Turkey were middle-income.

The author also conducted participant observations through attending family gatherings, such as breakfasts and birthdays, as well as through lending circles² over two years, organized by women (Bilecen 2019). Although the fieldwork conducted in this study is not representative of all Turkish migrant families in Germany, the long relationships developed in the field over the years led the author to talk to many others who were not in the sample of the study but appear in the field notes. Informal conversations with neighbors, artists, medical personnel, and friends of friends as well as field observations in both contexts complemented the information obtained through the fieldwork. The next section presents the findings in two parts: the embeddedness of informal social protection in formal protection, and the evaluation of asymmetries in resource exchanges across borders. Family and friendship ties in countries of both emigration and immigration are analyzed as well and are discussed as part of the findings for social protection and asymmetries. To protect the identities of respondents and those in their networks, all names are pseudonyms.

Findings: Transnational Social Protection from Both Ends

Informal social protection embedded in formal protection systems

Migrants and stayers agreed that the German welfare state was superior to the Turkish one. This perception justified migration, but it also served as a source of

TABLE 2
Respondents Characteristics in Turkey

Name	Relationship to the migrant respondents	Importance for migrants	Importance for stayers	Gender	Age	Marital Status	Labor Market Status
Hale	Berna's friend	Important	Very important	Female	41–50	Single	Employed
Nazlı	Berna's friend	Important	No mention	Female	41–50	Single	Employed
Necati	Faruk's friend	Less important	Very important	Male	31–40	Single	Employed
Hüseyin	Faruk's friend	Less important	Important	Male	31–40	Single	Employed
Selim	Sema's friend	Important	No mention	Male	41–50	Divorced	Employed
Buğra	Bora's friend	Important	No mention	Male	31–40	Single	Employed
Şükri	Berrin's brother	Very important	Important	Male	15–20	Single	Student
Ayşe	Ali's sister	Very important	Important	Female	21–30	Single	Student
Süheyla	Münevver's sister	Very important	Very important	Female	41–50	Married	Employed
Çetin	Süleyman's brother	Very important	Important	Male	51–60	Married	Pensioner

stigma for migrants. Contrary to the findings of McKenzie and Menjívar (2011), who interviewed staying wives with husbands who had migrated, in this study no stayers wished that their network contacts had not migrated, even if close family. I should note, however, that there were no couples who were geographically separated. The participants in Turkey had always supported or at least understood the need for migration because everyone in this study perceived Germany as a “super-state” (see also Bilecen, Çatır, and Orhon 2015).

Berna. Berna was born in Germany and then “returned” to Turkey with her parents, later migrating to Germany in the 1990s through marrying a second-generation migrant. Although Berna had a Turkish high school diploma and a good command of German, she did not find employment right away, as her educational credentials were not recognized in Germany. At the time of the interview, she was working part time at a department store while her husband, who is a second-generation migrant with vocational training, had a full-time, stable job. Berna spoke extensively about the German state as an advanced welfare state that offered employment, unemployment benefits, and educational assistance for individuals in every segment of society. She believed that, unlike in Turkey, individuals in Germany could achieve a better socioeconomic status because of the formal social protection in the country that contributes to the livelihood and life chances of individuals and their families. Although Berna is considered working class, she felt secure in terms of her life chances and access to healthcare in Germany.

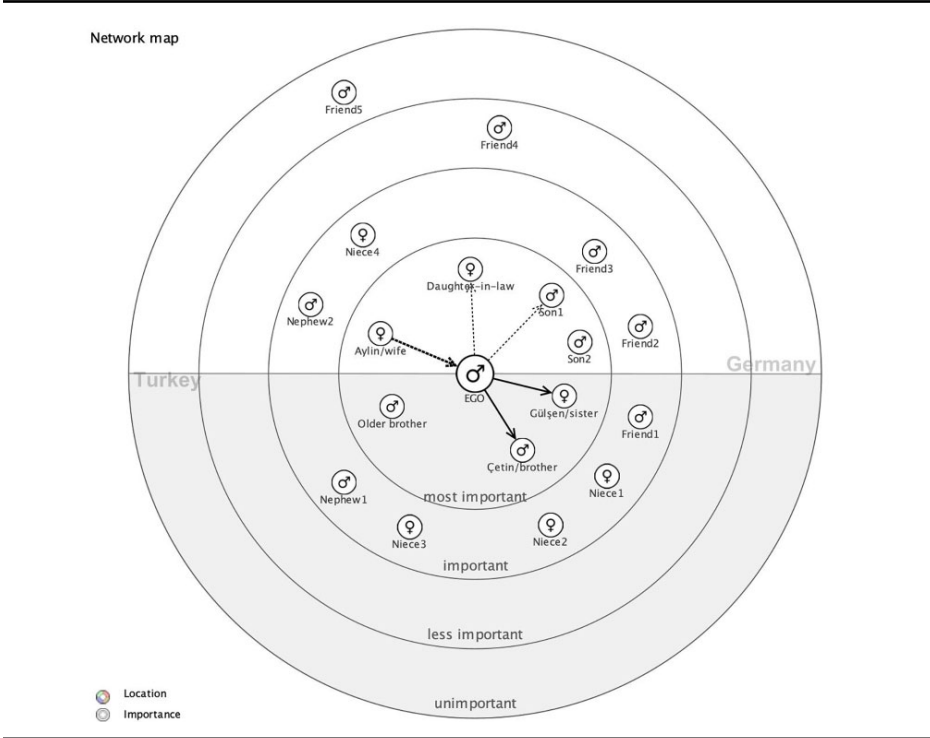
Berna emphasized the importance of a well-developed state assistance mechanism funded by a well-functioning tax system to prevent economic and social deprivation, even if a person is unemployed or has a low salary, as she did. She

noted that she managed to send some financial remittance to her parents, who could barely make ends meet. Berna's parents had retired in Turkey, and their only income was one pension tied to her father's employment. Because of a one-time contribution from the German state when they returned to Turkey in the early 1970s after the oil crisis, they could buy a house and live there with Berna's unemployed, adult brother. Berna's perception of the superiority of the German state was shared by Hale and Nazlı, Berna's friends in Turkey. Berna's family was familiar with the welfare state regime in both countries given their first-hand experience in Germany and their move back to Turkey; they knew what benefits she had access to, which made them aware of her social position in German society. Thus, her family had a more realistic view and expectation than did her friends. Berna wished that her parents could visit her in Germany regularly, but that required considerable financial capital for visa fees and flights. So, Berna visited them once a year.

Süleyman. Süleyman, who came to Germany in the 1960s for work, agreed with Berna's view that the welfare state in Germany is well-functioning. "Germany is a super-state," he said. "It helps everybody and everybody around me. . . . One can get unemployment benefits, what they call Hartz IV. They get it and they can live perfectly." Although his migration history is somewhat different from Berna's, they share the same perspective on how state policies, such as unemployment benefits, work to protect the poor. Süleyman is a first-generation migrant who came to Germany from Istanbul via the guest-worker agreement between the two countries. He immediately started work in a factory and, later, married Aylin, a woman from his neighborhood back home. She later joined him in Germany. Figures 1 and 2 represent their respective networks. While Süleyman was surrounded by many friends and family members, he only received care (e.g., household tasks, illness related matters, etc.) from his wife and provided financial protection to two of his siblings in Turkey. He also gave care to his son and his daughter-in-law through occasionally spending time with his grandson.

Aylin. Aylin tried to learn German but was unsuccessful. She, thus, perceived herself as distant from the majority society and socially excluded but "proud to [have] raised two children who are successfully employed in Germany." Although Aylin wanted to find a paid job, she had been held back by family obligations, such as taking care of the children and the household. She indicated that she had also been held back by her father as a child. Her parents were divorced and her sister, Hümeýra, had been living with her father while Aylin had been living with her mother. Aylin's father forced her to quit her studies after middle school, and later when she started to work he forced her to quit her job to stay at home. She has long been the caregiver to family members. She is now the primary caregiver to her elderly mother, who lives with them for six months of the year (the maximum amount of time on a visa that her mother could get). As a result, Aylin is not entitled to receive a pension from either Turkey or Germany. Although she could always choose a private scheme for the pension system in both contexts,

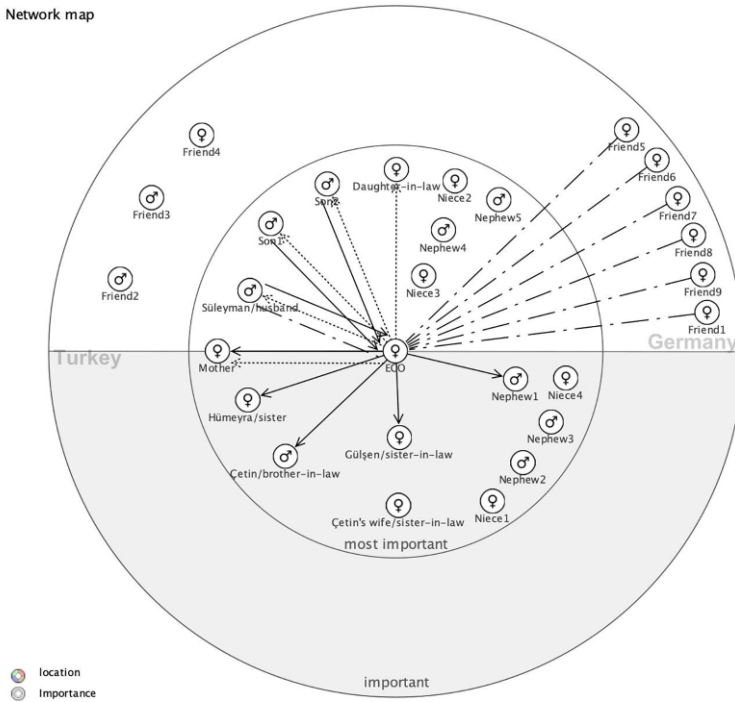
FIGURE 1
Süleyman’s Personal Network



NOTE: On the network maps, drawn with the software VennMaker (Figures 1–3), information exchange is indicated with a dashed-dotted line, care relations with a dotted line, and financial protection with a straight line. The more types of provision or receipt of protection an actor is involved in, the thicker the arrows. Arrows indicate directionality of the exchange, the absence of arrows in the relation indicate their bidirectionality.

she never had the means. Due to Süleyman and his sons’ hard work, they were able to buy a house in Germany and two in Turkey, even though each of their monthly incomes is average by German standards. As Figure 2 shows, Aylin had quite a few friends in Germany, all of whom were Turkish migrant women. With them, she had been organizing a lending circle called the “day of gold,” which made financial capital and emotional support available to its members during the monthly meetings (Bilecen 2019). Süleyman’s older sister, Gülşen, lived in Süleyman and Aylin’s flat in Istanbul, which is in the same building as the flat in which his brother Çetin lived, which Süleyman helped to buy. When Aylin and Süleyman go to Istanbul, they stay with Gülşen. Because of long lasting resentments after her parents’ divorce, Aylin has a somewhat complicated relationship with her sister, yet Hümeysra is still in her network map and from time to time Aylin sends her some money. During my interview with Aylin, it became clear that because Hümeysra was left behind in Turkey with an oppressive father, Aylin

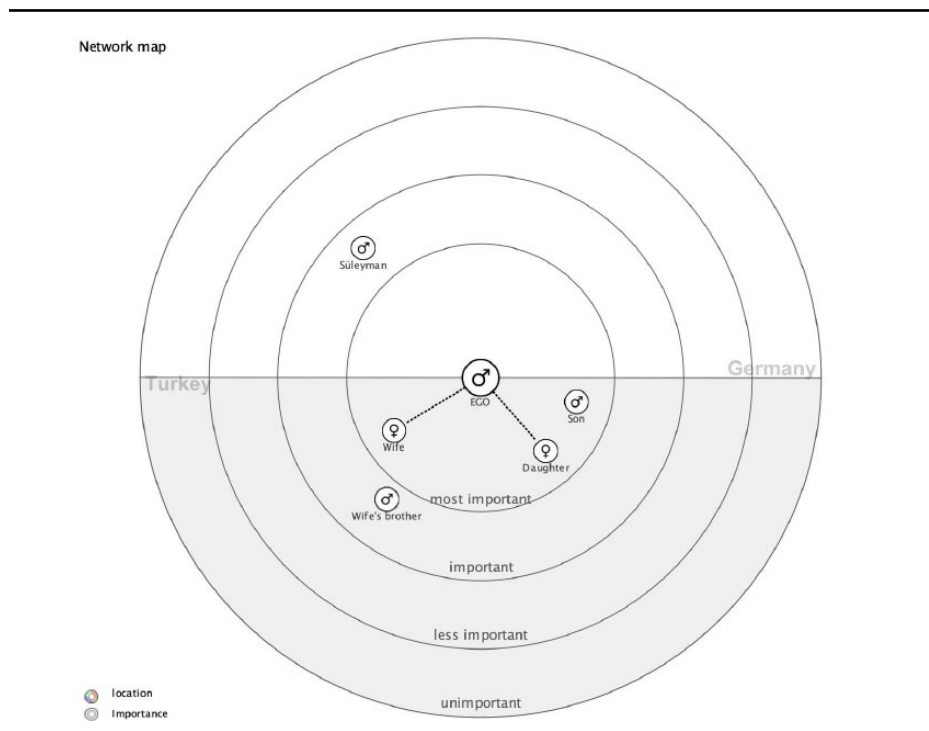
FIGURE 2
Aylin's Personal Network



felt that she was in a position to contribute to Hümeysra's well-being and that of her three children through financial protection when needed. When I asked about their relationship, Aylin told me that even though Hümeysra had the means to visit her in Germany, she had only done so once, but that they tended to see each other during Aylin's yearly summer visits to Turkey. Because of the hardships Hümeysra and her children face, Aylin does not expect Hümeysra to reciprocate and rather sees her as disadvantaged, and thus entitled to receiving support.

Çetin. Süleyman's and Aylin's family members in Turkey had similar perceptions of the German state infrastructures as being superior to Turkey's. They perceived Süleyman and his sons as doing very well financially. (The Euro was over twice the value of the Turkish Lira at the time of the interviews.) Aylin often hinted that Süleyman's family in Turkey had unrealistic financial expectations for them. Süleyman's brother in Turkey, Çetin, also felt that the nation-state infrastructure functioned well in Germany and that migrants were "backed up" by the state, unlike in Turkey. Çetin also briefly implied that, because they live in a strong welfare state, migrants to Germany do not need any resources from their personal relationships. Çetin also wanted to migrate, but he was not able to obtain a work permit. He lived on his pension from Turkey and is married to a

FIGURE 3
Çetin's Personal Network



homemaker and has three children; he is not in a condition to contribute financially to his brother, Süleyman, in times of need. Figure 3 represents Çetin's network map, which only contains his family members in Turkey and Süleyman in Germany. He mentioned care exchanges with his wife and daughter and did not even mention that Süleyman sends them money every month. Unlike his brother and sister-in-law, he has a rather small network. When asked about his friends, he said that none is qualified to be on the network map.

While Gouldner (1960) argues that indebtedness exists until a favor is returned, Çetin's accounts do not hint at any feelings of indebtedness to his brother or to Aylin. This could perhaps be because Çetin and Süleyman do not see the transaction as a one-time favor but, rather, as a normalized, continuous family obligation because Süleyman sends him remittances every month. This perspective is in line with Gouldner's notion of *normative reciprocity*, which results from status duties; that is, although migrants are in a low-income group in the countries of emigration, migrants are expected to contribute to transnational family welfare even if the stayers are not low-income. From a network perspective, Çetin is at a disadvantage because of his small network size, dependence on family members only, and a low resource exchange capacity in comparison to Süleyman and Aylin. Boccagni and Decimo (2013) argue that nonmigrants try to impose social control over migrants through reaffirming the power of original

bonds by, for example, bringing up their status in the family. Çetin—the younger brother who could not migrate although he wanted to and who had a small social network—seemed to exert this control, according to Aylin, as he often implied that he was entitled to receive financial support from Süleyman. As Hansen's (2004) work indicates, there are status obligations. Çetin is the younger brother and Süleyman is the migrant brother; both statuses have meanings in the wider family and are socially recognized by both brothers, as well as by others in the network, such as Aylin.

Similarly, migrants' friends in Turkey perceive migrants in Germany as being well protected by the German state, such that migrants do not need personal protection from their friends back home. For instance, Necati, a friend of another participant, Faruk, has seven siblings and extended family members who live in Germany and France. He stated:

In terms of social protection, those who live abroad are a bit luckier than us [in Turkey]. We [Turkey] are not a developed country in that respect. For example, when a German gets sick here, the German government sends an airplane over here. I think that is something you cannot compare to anything else. [. . .] Of course, they [family and friends in Europe] are better off than us, unfortunately, as a more developed country than us.

This widely held perception of superiority is reflected in the general discourse in Turkey, led migrants to be stigmatized, and normalized the expectation that migrants should contribute to their family welfare. The Turkish term *almancı* or *gurbetçi* emerged in the language to describe migrants who had left for better opportunities or selfish reasons. The two terms imply that migrants are not well-educated, and thus belong to the working class, and that they do not comply with Turkish social norms. In addition, migrants are portrayed by the society in Turkey as persons who put value on material things. My findings are in line with those in Fuller-Iglesias's (2015) research, who found that mainly former neighbors or in-laws criticized or gossiped about migrants. For those in Turkey without migrant family members, migrants are seen as having a higher socioeconomic position but are also perceived as traitors who left the country to seek a better income. These perceptions can be somewhat explained by feelings of envy or resentment that result because of the social inequalities among stayers with and without migrants in their families. Although my findings point to corroboration between movers and stayers who are entangled in formal and informal social protection systems, accounts from participants also brought out concerns about financial exchanges and the value of various resources.

Perceived asymmetries in informal social protection: Family and friendships

The initial years of migration from Turkey to Germany in the 1960s proved to be important because the financial flows back to stayers helped the Turkish economy. First-generation migrants were perceived as earning a great deal of money in the eyes of the stayers. Not only did immediate family members gain economic resources but communities and villages also prospered; thus, those in

small villages wanted to keep sending family members to Europe (Çelik, Beşpınar, and Kalaycıoğlu 2013). Although having a migrant in the wider family meant a general prosperity, not all family members benefited to the same degree. As Boccagni and Decimo (2013, 4–5) state:

Every interaction between money senders and recipients involves much more than a merely economic transaction. No less significant are the symbolic value, the expected destination, the roles and the power relationships that are attached to, and negotiated through, migrant monies.

The symbolic value of resources also depends on the perspective of the beholder, and the values attached to certain resources might change over time depending on the relationship between the giver and receiver. Some of my migrant respondents described being dissatisfied with and resenting certain family members or friends who had become too demanding and who made contact only when they were in trouble or needed financial assistance. For example, Aylin thought that she and her family in Germany gave too much financial protection to relatives who remained in Turkey. Aylin felt that family members in Turkey expected her to financially contribute because they perceived her as having a better socioeconomic position in Germany than those who remained in Turkey. Although migrants are obliged to give when they are asked, Aylin nevertheless felt that they had not received much in return. Although her brother-in-law, Çetin, thought that because they are a family, they all need to take care of each other, and, thus, that all resources should be granted to other family members by default; Aylin thought otherwise. She stated, “Well, we can’t get what we give, actually. I can’t say that it is equal because we always give, we do not really get—perhaps ‘once in forty years’” [Turkish expression of rarity]. Participant observations yielded many accounts when migrants discussed that they had severed ties with family members because they were demanding. Aylin, too, had conflicting relationships with her nieces and nephews, who had sometimes demanded financial help. Although many of these family members were listed in Aylin’s sociogram, they were listed as ambivalent ties.

Although Aylin resented being the provider in almost all cases, during our informal meetings after the interviews, it became clear that she enjoyed having “the upper hand” because it translated into power in the family—she had more say in what to buy, where and how much to save, and had a dominant place in daily decisions in the household. And she perceived an upward social mobility among her extended family that was made possible through her migration. According to her husband, Süleyman, the stayers are family members in need; thus, he sent a regular financial remittance to Çetin, and to his sister, Gülşen. He conceded bluntly that he was on the giving side in his family that remained in Turkey. For Süleyman, the help he gives is unequal, however, not because he does not receive anything back or receives something of a lower value, but because he cannot help his older brother and extended family such as nieces, nephews, and cousins to the same degree. He felt guilty or ashamed because he did not have the means to help these other family members. Süleyman’s accounts

also hinted at the norm of equity, that every sibling had the right to be equally supported by him.

Münevver. Two sisters who I interviewed, Münevver and Süheyla, commented on financial exchanges. Münevver first came to Germany in 1975 at the age of 21 and has never had a paid job. Right after she got married in Turkey, her husband left to work in Germany. Two years later, she joined him. She maintained close ties to her family, but after a while, she lost track of her friends in Turkey. Although her sister Süheyla and her brother from Turkey took care of their mother in Turkey on a daily basis, Münevver sent them money from Germany via her husband's income and, after he passed away, from her pension. Because she could not be in Turkey physically to take care of her mother (her low income restricted her from traveling frequently), Münevver sometimes felt guilty. She expressed appreciation to her siblings for their time and effort. As a daughter, Süheyla recounted that she did what she had to do and interpreted her care for her mother as a family obligation rather than a resource to be exchanged with her sister. In Süheyla's eyes, she could not reciprocate Münevver properly for the financial support that Münevver provided. Although Süheyla was a full-time employed civil servant in Turkey who was entitled to all state benefits, she and her family needed Münevver's regular financial contributions to sustain their livelihood while caring for Süheyla and Münevver's mother.

Although elderly care or emotional support are very important sources of protection, they are not considered a tangible resource in the eyes of both the sender and the receiver among my participants. Süheyla and Münevver desired a direct reciprocity of resources, but the reciprocity took different meanings. Süheyla noted, "Those who live abroad, well, my sister, I mean, it is just, you know, spiritually [I can provide support], in the phone calls, how much, through sharing their problems, barely that much. We don't have so much opportunity." Süheyla seemed to be unsatisfied with the exchanges she had with her sister, because she did not perceive the reciprocity to be equal in value and felt as if she was not providing enough. In contrast to Çetin, Süheyla felt that she had to reciprocate, most likely because she had a good job in Turkey and because she was aware of her sister's low socioeconomic status in Germany.

Münevver felt that, by taking care of their mother, her siblings gave her protection which could not be reciprocated financially. Münevver felt guilty about not being able to help and perceived the care for her mother as a favor and not as a resource. She could not care for her mother for an extended time, because if she were in Turkey for more than six months she would lose her residence permit in Germany, and thus, formal social protection entitlements such as access to health care would be jeopardized. The two sisters should care for their mother equally, but because one had migrated and thus was subjected to two nation-state schemes, the other took on the care of their mother. So, the care for their mother was perceived as a favor that needed to be returned, but it could not be matched by financial means because of its nonreciprocal emotional dimension.

All first-generation migrants in the sample spoke about their financial obligations and the mismatch with resource exchanges. Second-generation migrants in

the sample, Berna and Murat, whose parents were labor migrants, were the only ones who sent financial remittances to their returned elderly parents in Turkey. As the only person with a stable income (even though it was a low income) in her parental family and as the only female child, culturally Berna was expected to contribute to her parents financially and emotionally. I had the chance to observe Berna in many different settings and during many occasions (see also Bilecen 2019). I learned through these observations that she saw her financial contributions to her parents as necessary to maintain her parents' daily activities. With her contribution, her parents could buy better groceries and undertake a small construction project in their home to enhance their living conditions.

Moreover, as I have discussed elsewhere (Bilecen 2016), Berna relied on her two very close female friends in Turkey (Hale and Nazlı) to help with her parents. For example, she asked them to visit her parents from time to time to keep them company and to check on them. Berna was very much aware that there was a limit to the help from her friends, but sometimes she would consult with her female friends about her parents, even more so than with her brother. For Berna, their help with her parents was very important, while both Hale and Nazlı spoke mainly about the emotional support they exchanged with Berna on a weekly basis. Similarly, Murat sends his mother money when necessary. His mother and other family members in the household use the money for their daily necessities and to make ends meet most months. Although there are six siblings, Murat is expected to send money regularly because he has better and more stable employment and, more importantly, because he is a man.

Financial protection was usually given by family members, whereas friends did not exchange money but, rather, exchanged emotional support or the social status achieved from having a friend living abroad. For example, Nazlı, who works at her family's company in international trade and belongs to the middle-class in Turkey, and, therefore, had access to formal social protections in Turkey, visited Berna once in Germany, and they were in touch regularly. During Nazlı's visit with her family, Berna introduced Nazlı to her friends in Germany. Although she did not mention Berna in the network map, Nazlı described their relationship as very close: "Berna is very important for me; she is beyond a friend for me." Moreover, through her visit to Germany and with Berna's friends, Nazlı accumulated information about the German welfare state, which can be understood as "social remittances."

Faruk. Another participant, Faruk, migrated to Germany from Turkey in 1999 in his twenties to continue his studies in Germany. When his previous academic work in Turkey was not recognized, however, Faruk opened a small business. But the business failed, and at the time of the interview he was working in catering. Faruk was in his thirties when I interviewed him, and he was in frequent contact with his friends and relatives in Turkey through daily calls and yearly visits. In addition to these cross-border activities, he occasionally sent small amounts of money to his two brothers in Turkey. For our research, he indicated his friends, Necati and Hüseyin, could be interviewed, and both were. Neither of them ever mentioned any financial exchanges with Faruk but implied that having a friend abroad was a great way to be connected with the world.

Although asking for money among friends is not easy, Faruk made it clear to me on several occasions that he would always be there for his friends because he would like to share his success with the “stayers.”

Different from family members’ “taking protection for granted” or having normative attitudes about obligations, friends tended to be cautious when it came to money and, even more so, had a fear of receiving money as they might not be able to pay it back or would have to reciprocate some other way that would not be perceived as equivalent by their friend. As Hansen (2004) has argued, individuals do not tend to ask for favors when the price of reciprocity seems too high. Thus, friends in Turkey in my sample may have thought that the price to repay financial help from their friends in Germany would simply be too high or might not be valued as equal or matching the initial favor. Another factor was the economic and social positions of migrants and stayers in their respective countries. In the case of Necati and Hüseyin, the staying friends had their own businesses and were middle-class in Turkey even though they had not been educated to the same degree as Faruk, who was in the low-income group in Germany. In the sample, friends in Turkey seemed to be doing well, so perhaps they did not need financial protection from their friends in Germany, and such friendships across borders served to fulfill emotional needs instead.

Clearly, not all friendships are the same, and friends can perceive the same things differently. For example, Sema arrived in Germany during the end of the 1990s as an asylum seeker, escaping political violence in Turkey. She put all of her contacts in the important circle in the network map and differentiated her family members from friends, not through their importance in her life, but through what kind of protection she actually exchanged and theoretically would exchange with them. Sema felt close only to her family members and would accept financial means from them, but mentioned her reluctance to exchange such resources with friends. To her, friends were there to socialize with and to exchange useful information. She talked at length about how important her friend Selim was in her life. When the research team interviewed Selim, he never mentioned Sema during the interview or in his network map.

For migrants, despite the physical distance, relationships continue to exist with those in their origin country. However, the “staying” friends may feel that the migrants’ lives went on and that they made new friendships in their new country. Perhaps the staying friends also have opportunities to meet new people and to create new friendships, while the ones with those who migrated dissolve over time. This may have been the case with Sema and Selim. Sema had never visited Turkey after she left, and Selim might value face-to-face relationships and spending time together, and that is, perhaps, why he did not mention Sema in his interview. Having migrant status (Sema) might have disrupted the friendship in the eyes of the stayer (Selim).

This analysis shows that power dynamics were changed in family relationships as a result of migrants’ double embeddedness in nation-state social protection systems. Through migration, some individuals had power over resources, but stayers’ continued non-reciprocation was seen as a loss of resources by migrants. While friendships were more easily dissolved than family ties, due to

geographical and emotional distance, they were the least affected by migrants' embeddedness in two nation-states. Being in a stronger welfare state, migrants are perceived to be doing better, and, thus, become burdened by family expectations.

Discussion

Like other articles in this special issue, this article focuses on financial protection, the norm of reciprocity, and the differentiated role of family and friendship. This study considers these central issues of the volume from a transnational perspective, in which two formal social protection systems rule. This has implications for the movers and stayers depending on the type of relationship (family and friendships). Moreover, this article shows how asymmetries in power and unequal flows of social and financial protection are perceived by both sides in dyadic (migrant/nonmigrant) relationships.

This article makes three novel contributions to research on social protection: it provides a discussion of personal networks' embeddedness in formal systems; it goes beyond a unilateral view of resource exchanges (e.g., financial remittances); and it extends beyond the primary focus on kin in the social network literature.

First, the analysis shows how migrants' double embeddedness within nation-state frameworks impacts which resources flow and in what direction, and how relationships are shaped. The social welfare scheme in Germany helped the migrants in my study to be financially secure, even if considered lower class in Germany, which allowed them to be able to send remittances home to Turkey. Residency-based social policies limited their ability to provide physical care to family members in their country of origin. It is important to note that the "superior" welfare scheme of Germany changed the power balance in personal relationships for my participants, giving migrants the upper hand in family decisions, even though their social position in Germany was lower than the social positions of those who stayed in Turkey. Both migrants and stayers perceived the country of emigration as superior and, thus, normalized the financial flows from migrants to staying family members. In the eyes of the stayers, migrants lived in a superior welfare state. This view overlooks migrants' vulnerabilities, such as social exclusion or not having all of the perceived entitlements, such as pensions. Family members felt entitled to migrants' remittances without any reciprocation because migrants lived in a "superior" state, even though their social position was not high in Germany. Friends of migrants who stayed in Turkey did not ask for anything from their migrant friends; the fear of reciprocity held them back. Friends were concerned that they might not be able to reciprocate the favor at all, or even if they did, they worried the value might not be perceived as matching that of their friends' favor. In my sample, although staying friends belonged to the middle-class in Turkey while migrants were low-income in Germany, friends still perceived migrants as doing better. Friendships among the migrants and stayers in this study

were mostly about companionship, as previous work has also demonstrated (Wellman and Wortley 1990).

Second, this study looks at the dynamics of reciprocity within personal networks. Both movers and stayers shared certain meanings they attributed to migration (Germany has superior state infrastructures, which justified migration and stigmatized migrants and the idea that migrants do “better” economically, so that they need to send financial remittances), and the negotiation of resource flows were influenced by these attributions. Building on Gouldner’s (1960) and Hansen’s (2004) work, this study investigates the dynamics of reciprocity between migrants’ family members and friendships. The multisited matched sample design led to a fine-grained understanding of the implications of migration on the stayers. In such a design, not only who gives what and to whom, but also the value of what is given from different perspectives, is analyzed. For instance, my findings suggest that friends were more aware and cautious about expectations bound by normative reciprocity that might have been evoked through asking for support. In line with one of the Hansen’s (2004) rules of reciprocity, friends in my study did not ask for resources when it necessitated a return that was too costly or might not have been of equivalent value.

Third, this study provides an extension beyond the primary focus in the literature on kin and the heterogeneity of relations. Although earlier research has made it clear that family ties have a critical place in the lives of migrants (e.g., Boccagni 2015; Mazzucato 2009, 2011; Parreñas 2001), this study shows how friendships are also important for migrants, mainly for emotional support and companionship on both ends. For some in the sample, sending money to family members was perceived to be a necessity, but friendships had different dynamics and not all friendships were considered equal or as having resources that could be tapped into. Although some of the friendships involved resource exchanges, others dissolved over time in the view of the stayers but not necessarily in the eyes of the movers. Although the evidence in this study indicates that there are more resource exchanges between family members, friendships were still very important for some of the migrants and their transnational friends. Further studies could investigate what makes certain friendships dissolve while others continue across borders.

Understanding how protective resources are exchanged and evaluated by movers and stayers is fundamental to designing effective social policies for contemporary migrant families that do not necessarily match the “ideal” family living in only one nation-state. My findings suggest that, whether with family members or friends, transnational ties are a crucial part of migrants’ lives and should be considered when devising social protection programs and policies for international migrants. For example, my interviews with migrants showed that elderly care from a distance came up against some obstacles because formal social protection policies are designed mainly to meet the needs of citizens within the boundaries of a given nation-state. Family and formal welfare systems in other parts of the world may be unable to provide elderly care, and migrant family members might be called upon to provide such care. Thus, social policies in the countries of emigration should assist migrants who need to give

care in the countries of origin through securing or at least not jeopardizing their entitlements in the countries of destination. Moreover, social and economic policies need to be designed with modern family formations (i.e., transnational families) and shifting gender dynamics in families in mind.

Notes

1. The project, “Transnationality, the Distribution of Informal Social Security and Inequalities,” was funded by the German Research Foundation (DFG) within the framework of the Collaborative Research Centre (SFB) 882 at Bielefeld University (2011–2015). For more information about the project, see <https://sfb882.uni-bielefeld.de/en/projects/c3.html>. The project also collected data from migrants with Polish and Kazakh origins as well as data from various sources, such as document analysis, expert interviews, and matched interviews with interviewees’ significant others in the respective emigration countries.

2. Lending circles are rotated savings and credit associations (ROSCAs) based on trust, solidarity, and reciprocity pooling together a preset amount of money periodically. Every member gets the accumulated sum in turns over time (Bilecen 2019).

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